

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-21 and 23-41 are presented for consideration, with Claims 1, 21 and 41 being independent.

The independent claims, and selected dependent claims, have been amended to further distinguish Applicants' invention from the cited art.

Initially, in response to the comments in paragraph 2 of the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that Applicants have made no admission that the various Official Notices as set forth in previous Office Actions are common knowledge and admitted prior art.

Claims 1, 3-5, 8-13, 16, 21, 23, 24, 28-33, 36 and 41 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig '294. In addition, Claims 6, 7, 18-20, 25-27 and 38-40 are rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig in view of Brunson '823, and Claims 14, 15, 17, 34, 35 and 37 are rejected as allegedly being obvious over Ludwig and further in view of Palmer '683. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 of Applicants' invention relates to a distributed office system provided with terminal devices installed for a plurality of users, and a server device connected to the terminal devices via a communication channel, for displaying information on a screen of a terminal device of each of the users. The server includes receiving means for receiving a picked-up image repeatedly and information on whether a user is presently working or on leave from each of the terminal devices, and transmitting means for transmitting the picked-up image repeatedly and the information to each of the terminal devices. Each of the terminal devices includes receiving means for receiving the picked-up image repeatedly and the information on whether a user is presently working or on leave from the each of the terminal devices, and display means for displaying, among other information, a virtual office area where a group of a

user's virtual single rooms of a department are displayed, each user's virtual single room having the received picked-up image which is updated repeatedly and having information whether the user is working or on leave transmitted from the server device and a user's name. As amended, Claim 1 includes changing means for changing display of a first group of the user's virtual single rooms into display of a second group of the user's virtual single rooms of a second department in response to selecting the second department indicated in an organization chart.

Claims 21 and 41 relate to a method of managing terminal devices provided for a plurality of users in a distributed office system, and terminal devices, respectively, and have been amended along the same lines as Claim 1. These claims have thus also been amended to set forth changing a display of a first group of a user's virtual single rooms of a first department into a display of a second group of the user's virtual single rooms of a second department in response to selecting the second department indicated in an organization chart. Support for the claim amendments can be found, for example, in Figure 7 and the accompanying specification beginning on page 23, line 3.

In accordance with Applicants' claimed invention, a distributed office system is capable of displaying relevant, updated information about each user, and the display can be easily changed from a first group of the user's virtual single rooms of a first department to a second group of the user's virtual single rooms of a second department.

The patent to Ludwig relates to a multimedia collaboration system that displays an information aggregate of another user's working station. The computer based system in Ludwig uses geographically dispersed multimedia LANs that are connected by a WAN. In Ludwig, a collaboration initiator indicates members registered in an organization, and session participants are selected from a graphical rolodex (see Figure 7 and column 18, line 60, et seq.).

As understood, a new participant can be invited by clicking the ADD button (see column 25, lines 14-18).

In contrast to Applicants' claimed invention, however, Ludwig does not teach or suggest, among other features, changing a display of a first group of a user's virtual single rooms of a first department into a display of a second group of the user's virtual single rooms of a second department in response to selecting the second department indicated in an organization chart. In other words, Ludwig is not capable of changing from a first group to a second group in the manner set forth in Applicants' claimed invention. On this point, the Office Action did not point out which portion of Ludwig is relied upon for a teaching or suggestion of the claimed changing means.

Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 1, 3-5, 8-13, 16, 21, 23, 24, 28-33, 36 and 41 under 35 U.S.C. §103 is respectfully requested.

The secondary citations to Brunson and Palmer fail to compensate for the deficiencies in Ludwig. In Brunson, a video messaging system is provided, and the Office Action relies on this citation for a teaching of a universal mailbox to store messages. In Palmer, a video teleconferencing method and apparatus is provided, and this patent is relied upon for its teaching of frame rate control.

Accordingly, without conceding the propriety of modifying Ludwig in view of either Brunson or Palmer, it is submitted that such combinations still fail to teach or suggest Applicants' claimed invention.

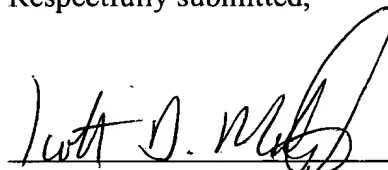
Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of Claims 6, 7, 14, 15, 17-20, 25-27, 34, 35 and 37-40 are respectfully requested.

Accordingly, it is submitted that Applicants' invention as set forth in independent Claims 1, 21 and 41 is patentable over the cited art. In addition, dependent Claims 3-20 and 23-40 set forth additional features of Applicants' invention. Independent consideration of the dependent claims is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration and allowance of this application is deemed to be in order and such action is respectfully requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below-listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott D. Malpede", is written over a horizontal line.

Attorney for Applicants
Scott D. Malpede
Registration No. 32,533

FITZPATRICK, CELLA, HARPER & SCINTO
30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10112-3801
Facsimile: (212) 218-2200

SDM:mmm

DC_MAIN 169808v1